

Health Advisory:

Hepatitis A Linked to Adoptions From Ethiopia

July 20, 2007

This document will be updated as new information becomes available. The current version can always be viewed at <http://www.dhss.mo.gov>.

The Missouri Department of Health & Senior Services (DHSS) is now using 4 types of documents to provide important information to medical and public health professionals, and to other interested persons:

Health Alerts convey information of the highest level of importance which warrants immediate action or attention from Missouri health providers, emergency responders, public health agencies, and/or the public.

Health Advisories provide important information for a specific incident or situation, including that impacting neighboring states; may not require immediate action.

Health Guidances contain comprehensive information pertaining to a particular disease or condition, and include recommendations, guidelines, etc. endorsed by DHSS.

Health Updates provide new or updated information on an incident or situation; can also provide information to update a previously sent Health Alert, Health Advisory, or Health Guidance; unlikely to require immediate action.

Health Advisory
July 20, 2007

**FROM: JANE DRUMMOND
DIRECTOR**

**SUBJECT: Hepatitis A in Children and Adults Linked to Adoptions
From Ethiopia**

The following information was taken, with minor modifications, from a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) *Health Advisory* issued July 19, 2007.

CDC has recently received reports of hepatitis A in children and adults linked to adoptees from Ethiopia. Hepatitis A is a liver disease caused by the hepatitis A virus. Symptoms usually occur abruptly and include fatigue, abdominal pain, loss of appetite, nausea, jaundice, and diarrhea. Jaundice is common in adults but rare in children. Most children under the age of 6 years do not get sick from the infection, but can spread it to older children and adults, who often become ill. Older persons and persons with chronic liver disease can have more serious illness. The overall mortality rate from hepatitis A is 0.3%, but it is 1.8% among persons aged ≥ 50 years. Symptoms generally last up to 2 months; there is no chronic (long-term) form of the disease.

The virus is found in the stool of persons with hepatitis A. It is usually spread from person to person by putting something in the mouth that has been contaminated with stool. Frequent hand washing with soap and water, particularly after using the bathroom, changing a diaper, and before preparing or eating food, is very important in preventing the spread of hepatitis A.

To prevent hepatitis A virus infections, CDC recommends that travelers to areas with high rates of hepatitis A, including Ethiopia, receive hepatitis A vaccine as soon as travel is considered. CDC also recommends that all children ≥ 1 year of age receive the hepatitis A vaccine. Other household members and caregivers of children adopted from Ethiopia should consider being vaccinated before adopted children are brought to the United States. Guidelines for clinicians on the use of hepatitis A vaccine are available at <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5507a1.htm>.

Adopted children, household members or other persons experiencing symptoms of hepatitis A should contact a health-care provider for an evaluation. Persons exposed to hepatitis A who have not been previously immunized should contact their health-care provider or local public health agency to determine if they should receive immunoglobulin (IG), which might prevent the illness. Clinical guidelines on hepatitis A postexposure prophylaxis with IG are available at <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5507a1.htm>. For general information on hepatitis A, see <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/hepatitis/>.

CDC recommends that all international travelers consult a travel health-care provider 4-6 weeks prior to travel to determine if any other measures, such as immunizations or medications, are indicated for the planned itinerary. Vaccine-preventable diseases, such as measles and mumps, are still common in many parts of the world, including developed countries. The CDC website <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/> has a specific section for Traveling with Children, which includes general health advice for international adoptees and their adoptive parents, and Travel Notices, which describe current disease information of interest to travelers.

Questions should be directed to the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services' Bureau of Communicable Disease Control and Prevention at 573/751-6113 or 866/628-9891.

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